

POLITICS- SPORTS- HISTORY- PERSONALITIES 'A PRIMER'

A prominent issue in Scotland in current times is the issue of [Scottish independence](#), that is the creation of an independent Scotland outside the United Kingdom. The pro-independence Scottish government plans to ask the people of Scotland, 'Should Scotland be an independent country?', in a referendum on 18 September 2014. The [SNP](#) and the Scottish Greens will campaign in favour of independence, whereas the Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat parties will campaign to maintain Scotland's role within the United Kingdom. The party with the largest number of seats in the Scottish Parliament is the [Scottish National Party](#) which campaigns for [Scottish independence](#). The current [First Minister](#) is [Alex Salmond](#) of the SNP who leads a majority government as of 5 May 2011 elections. 2014 This September the Scottish people will vote to become independent from England.....

Scotland entered into a [political union](#) with [England](#) in 1707, and since then has had representation in the British parliament. Currently, [59 Members](#) of Parliament (MPs) represent Scottish constituencies at Westminster, and issues such as the [constitution](#), [foreign affairs](#), [defence](#), [social security](#), [pensions](#), issues of medical ethics, and fiscal, economic and monetary policy are decided on at Westminster. In 1999, an 129-member [Scottish Parliament](#) was established in [Edinburgh](#), which has power to make laws over agriculture, education, environment, health, local government and justice. In the UK government, Scottish affairs are represented by the [Secretary of State for Scotland](#), currently [Michael Moore](#) MP, and the [Scottish Government](#) is headed by a [First Minister](#), who is the leader of the political party with the most support in the Scottish Parliament, currently [Alex Salmond](#) MSP. The [head of state](#) in Scotland is the [British monarch](#), currently [Queen Elizabeth II](#) (since 1952). As the UK is part of the [European Union](#), Scotland also elects 6 Members to sit in the [European Parliament](#).

Scotland can best be described as having a multi-party system. In the Scottish Parliament, the [centre-left](#) pro-independence [Scottish National Party](#) (SNP) is the party which forms government, currently holding a majority of seats in the parliament (65 out of 129). Opposition parties include the [Scottish Labour Party](#) (centre-left, [social democratic](#)), the [Scottish Conservative Party](#) (centre-right, [conservative](#)), the [Scottish Liberal Democrats](#) (centrist, [social liberal](#)), and the [Scottish Green Party](#) (centre-left, [environmentalist](#)). Elections are held once every four years, with 73 Members being elected to represent constituencies, and the remaining 56 elected via a system of proportional representation. At Westminster, Scotland is represented by 12 MPs in the current [coalition government](#) (11 [Liberal Democrats](#) and 1 [Conservative](#)), 41 MPs in the [Opposition Labour Party](#), and 6 MPs for the Scottish National Party.

The **Scottish Premiership** is the top division of the [Scottish Professional Football League](#), the league competition for professional [football](#) clubs in Scotland. The Scottish Premiership was established in July 2013, after the Scottish Professional Football League was formed by a merger of the [Scottish Premier League](#) and [Scottish Football League](#). Teams receive three points for a win and one point for a draw. No points are awarded for a loss. Teams are ranked by total points, then [goal difference](#), and then goals scored. At the end of each season, the club with the most points is crowned [league champion](#). If points are equal, the goal difference and then goals scored determine the winner.

know at least who has won the 2014 cup.....

If you like, get to

The modern game of Golf originated in Scotland, where the first written record of golf is [James II's](#) banning of the game in 1457, as an unwelcome distraction to learning archery.^[7] To many golfers, the [Old Course](#) at [St Andrews](#), a links course dating to before 1574, is considered to be a site of

pilgrimage.^[8] Golf is documented as being played on [Musselburgh Links](#), East Lothian, Scotland as early as 2 March 1672, which is certified as the oldest golf course in the world by Guinness World Records.^{[9][10]} The oldest surviving [rules of golf](#) were compiled in March 1744 for the Company of Gentlemen Golfers, later renamed [The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers](#), which was played at [Leith](#), Scotland. The world's oldest golf tournament in existence, and golf's first major, is [The Open Championship](#), which was first played on 17 October 1860 at [Prestwick Golf Club](#), in Ayrshire, Scotland.

Go To: www.scotland.org Wonderful site to explore....

NORTHERN IRELAND/ ULSTER: Ulster has a population of just over 2 million people and an area of 21,552 square kilometres (8,321 sq mi). Its biggest city, [Belfast](#), has an urban population of over half a million inhabitants, making it the [second-largest city in Ireland](#) and the [10th largest urban area](#) in the UK. Six of Ulster's nine [counties](#), [Antrim](#), [Armagh](#), [Down](#), [Fermanagh](#), [Londonderry](#) and [Tyrone](#), including the former parliamentary boroughs of [Belfast](#) and [Londonderry](#), form [Northern Ireland](#) which remained part of the United Kingdom after the [partition of Ireland](#) in 1921. Three Ulster counties – [Cavan](#), [Donegal](#) and [Monaghan](#) – form part of the [Republic of Ireland](#). About half of Ulster's population lives in counties Antrim and Down. Across the nine counties, according to the aggregate UK [2011 Census](#) for Northern Ireland, and Irish 2011 Census for counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan, there is a slim [Catholic](#) majority over [Protestant](#) (50.8% against 42.7%). [Partition of Ireland](#), first mooted in 1912, was introduced with the enactment of the [Government of Ireland Act 1920](#), which gave self-government/Home rule to six of Ulster's north-eastern counties within the UK. This was confirmed by the [Anglo-Irish Treaty](#) (6 December 1921). One of the primary stipulations of the treaty was the partition of Ireland into the UK [dominion](#) of the [Irish Free State](#) (now the sovereign [Republic of Ireland](#)) and the home rule institution of [Northern Ireland](#). Hostilities in the Irish War of Independence formally ceased on 11 July 1921. Low-level violence, however, continued in Ulster, causing [Michael Collins](#) order a boycott of Northern products in protest at attacks on the Catholic/Nationalist community. When the [Irish Free State](#) came into existence in 1922, the Northern Ireland Parliament (already in existence) was given the option to 'opt out', which it did.

Following the Anglo Irish treaty, the exact border between the two UK dominions of the [Irish Free State](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) was decided by the [Boundary Commission](#) in 1925, in which the line was drawn around six of Ulster's nine counties.

Electorally, voting in the six [Northern Ireland](#) counties of Ulster tends to follow religious or sectarian lines; noticeable religious demarcation does not exist in the South Ulster counties of Cavan and Monaghan in the [Republic of Ireland](#). County Donegal is largely a Catholic county, but with a large [Protestant](#) minority. Generally, Protestants in Donegal vote for the political party [Fine Gael](#) ("Family of the Irish"). However, religious sectarianism in politics has largely disappeared from the rest of the Republic of Ireland. This was illustrated when [Erskine H. Childers](#), a [Church of Ireland](#) member and [Teachta Dála](#) (TD, a member of the lower house of the National Parliament) who had represented Monaghan, won election as [President](#) after having served as a long-term minister under [Fianna Fáil](#) [Taoisigh Éamon de Valera](#), [Seán Lemass](#) and [Jack Lynch](#).

The [Orange Order](#) freely organises in counties Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, with several Orange parades taking place throughout County Donegal each year. The only major Orange Order march in the [Republic of Ireland](#) takes place every July in the village of [Rosstown](#), near [Ballyshannon](#), in the south of County Donegal.

As of 2006, Northern Ireland has eight Catholic members of parliament (of a total of 18 from the whole of Northern Ireland) in the [British House of Commons](#) at [Westminster](#); and the other three counties have one Protestant T.D. of the ten it has elected to [Dáil Éireann](#), the Lower House of the Oireachtas, the

parliament of the Republic of Ireland. At present (August 2007) County Donegal sends six T.D.'s to Dáil Éireann. The county is divided into two constituencies: Donegal North-East and Donegal South-West, each with three T.D.'s. County Cavan and County Monaghan form the one constituency called Cavan-Monaghan, which sends five T.D.'s to the Dáil (one of whom is a Protestant).

The historic [Flag of Ulster](#) served as the basis for the [Ulster Banner](#) (often referred to as the Flag of Northern Ireland), which was the

flag of the [Government of Northern Ireland](#) until the proroguing of the [Stormont](#) parliament in 1973.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: The whole island of **Ireland** formed a constituent part of the [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland](#) from 1801 to 1922. For almost all of this period, Ireland was governed by the [Parliament of the United Kingdom](#) in London through its [Dublin Castle administration in Ireland](#). Ireland faced considerable economic difficulties in the 19th century, including the [Great Famine](#) of the 1840s. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a vigorous campaign for [Irish Home Rule](#). While legislation enabling Irish Home Rule was eventually passed, vigorous and armed opposition from Irish unionists, particularly in Ulster, opposed it. Proclamation was shelved for the duration following the outbreak of the Great War. By 1918, however, moderate [nationalism](#) had been eclipsed by militant republican separatism. Ulster Unionism was adamantly opposed to its implementation.

Ireland underwent major highs and lows economically during the 19th century; from economic booms during the [Napoleonic Wars](#) and in the late 19th century (when it experienced a surge in economic growth unmatched until the '[Celtic Tiger](#)' boom of the 1990s), to severe economic downturns and a series of famines, the last threatening in 1879. The worst of these was the [Great Irish Famine](#) (1845–1849), in which about one million people died and another million emigrated.

Ireland's economic problems were in part the result of the small size of Irish landholdings and a large increase in the population in the years before the famine. In particular, both the law and social tradition provided for subdivision of land, with all sons inheriting equal shares in a farm, meaning that farms became so small that only one crop, potatoes, could be grown in sufficient amounts to feed a family. Furthermore, many estates, from whom the small farmers rented, were poorly run by absentee landlords and in many cases heavily mortgaged. Enclosures of land since the start of the 19th century had also exacerbated the problem, and the extensive grazing of cattle had contributed to the smaller plots of land available to tenants to raise their crops.

In the new Whig government in Britain (from 1846), [Charles Trevelyan](#) became assistant secretary to the Treasury, and largely responsible for the British government's response to the famine in Ireland. When [potato blight](#) hit the island in 1845, much of the rural population was left without food. Unfortunately at this time, the then Prime Minister Lord John Russell adhered to a strict *laissez-faire* economic policy, which maintained that further state intervention would have the whole country dependent on hand-outs, and that what was needed was for economic viability to be encouraged. Despite a net surplus of food produced locally in Ireland, [it was exported](#) to England and elsewhere. Public works schemes were set up but proved inadequate, and the situation became catastrophic when epidemics of typhoid, cholera and dysentery took hold. Enormous sums were raised all over the world by charities (Native Americans sent supplies, as did the [Ottoman Empire](#), while [Queen Victoria](#) personally gave the equivalent in modern money of €70,000). However the inadequate nature of the [British government's](#) initiatives led to a problem becoming a catastrophe; the class of [cottiers](#) or farm labourers was virtually wiped out.

Emigration was not uncommon in Ireland in the years preceding the famine. Between 1815–1845, Ireland had already established itself as the major supplier of overseas labour to Great Britain and America.^[7] However, emigration reached a peak during the famine, particularly in the years 1846–1855. The famine also saw increased emigration to Canada and assisted passages to Australia. Because of ongoing political tensions between the US and the UK, the large and influential Irish American [diaspora](#) created, financed and encouraged the Irish independence movement. In 1858, the [Irish Republican Brotherhood](#) (IRB, also known as the [Fenians](#)) was founded as a secret society dedicated to armed rebellion against the British. A related organisation formed in New York was known

as [Clan na Gael](#), which several times organised raids into the British [Province of Canada](#). While the Fenians had a considerable presence in rural Ireland, the [Fenian Rising](#) launched in 1867 was a fiasco and was contained by police rather than the British military. Moreover, wider support for [Irish republicanism](#), in the face of harsh laws against [sedition](#), was minimal in Ireland in the period; as late as the 1860s, mass meetings of constitutional [nationalists](#) ended with the singing of "God Save the Queen" while royal visits often drew cheering crowds.

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The [Irish state](#) came into being in 1922 as the [Irish Free State](#), a dominion of the [British Commonwealth](#), having seceded from the United Kingdom under the [Anglo-Irish Treaty](#). It comprises 26 of the [island of Ireland's](#) 32 counties. The [1937 constitution](#) renamed the state *Ireland*. In 1949 it explicitly became a republic, definitively ending its tenuous membership of the British Commonwealth. In 1973 it joined the [European Communities](#).